

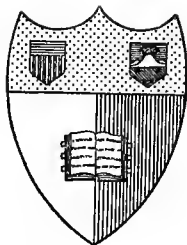
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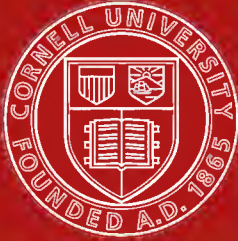
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# SHAKESPEARE:

## AN ODE

FOR THE

TERCENTENARY OF SHAKESPEARE'S BIRTHDAY.

---

BY J. E. CARPENTER.

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LONDON:

ROUTLEDGE, WARNE AND ROUTLEDGE,

BROADWAY, LUDGATE HILL.

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1864.

SHILLING.









TO  
WESTLAND MARSTON, ESQUIRE, LL.D.,

WHO,

AT A PERIOD WHEN THE SENSATIONAL MELODRAMA

COMMANDS THE SYMPATHIES OF THE PUBLIC,

REMAINS FAITHFUL IN HIS DEVOTION

TO THE

POETIC, MORAL AND PHILOSOPHIC DRAMA,

AND SUSTAINS IT BY THE FORCE OF HIS GENIUS AS

ITS SUCCESSFUL AND CHIEF REPRESENTATIVE,

THIS ODE,

WRITTEN FOR

THE CELEBRATION OF THE TERCENTENARY OF SHAKESPEARE'S BIRTHDAY,

HELD AT THE

URBAN CLUB, 1864,

IS

RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED

BY HIS ADMIRING AND FAITHFUL SERVANT,

J. E. CARPENTER.



## SHAKESPEARE.

---

Hail! to the day that gave to earth  
Its proudest name with Shakespeare's birth!  
Hail! to the day when rose the star,  
Like that the Shepherds watched afar,  
That guides the Pilgrim far away  
To where his honored ashes lay;  
That rose three centuries ago,  
Yet, beaming with a brighter glow,  
Gathers fresh lustre as it soars  
From Britain's Isles to distant shores;  
That Bards unborn shall sweetly hymn,  
Nor time, nor distance make more dim.  
Hail! mighty Shakespeare—thou to-day  
Shalt claim my tributary lay.  
Though worthier bard might haply deem  
Thee fitter subject for his theme,  
My humble muse would fain aspire  
To catch awhile the Poet's fire;  
Secure that, while she wings her flight  
To realms of fancy and delight,  
A band of brothers lends the willing ear,  
Nor deigns to censure where the song's sincere;  
A host of friends whose bosoms throb the same,  
To bless and celebrate great Shakespeare's fame.

### II.

Three hundred years! and yet no second birth  
'Mid all the millions that have peopled earth,

So great, so grand, so wondrous, so sublime,  
 O'ertowering all, defying Change and Time,  
 As that we celebrate on this great day,  
 That gave to England Shaksepeare!

He whose sway

Survives the proudest conqueror ever sought,  
 The mighty monarch of the realms of thought!  
 Three hundred years! yet all left far behind  
 The grasp, the compass of *one* master-mind!  
 None to dispute—no rival near his throne—  
 The Fairy world of Fancy all his own;  
 The fine creations of that wondrous brain,  
 Unmatched in poet's theme or minstrel's strain—  
 And yet, familiar as the woodland flowers,  
 Or fairy tale that cheered our childhood's hours;  
 As mother-love, or passions that, at length,  
 Grow with our growth and strengthen with our strength,  
 Till they become of life and thought a part—  
 The intellectual breathings of the heart!

Three hundred years! Look back to history's page,  
 Its proudest names survive on Shakespeare's stage;  
 The laurel'd Bard proclaims the Hero's name,  
 And, lo! 'tis stamped upon the scroll of Fame—  
 There to endure, when crumbled into dust,  
 The towering column and the sculptur'd bust,  
 Secure of all that human power can give,  
 While language lasts, or Shakespeare's lines still live.  
 And shall we raise no trophy to his name,  
 Whom Milton lauded as the "heir of Fame?"  
 Whose varied fancy learned Johnson drew,  
 And told us Shakespeare, while to nature true,  
 "Exhausted worlds, and then imagined new!"

Well may your modern minstrel pause to quote  
 Those truthful lines that sum up all he wrote,  
 And, trembling, shrink half-frightened that you ask  
 His feeble pencil to perform its task;  
 But so it is, the mightier passed away,  
 The humbler bears the burden of the day—  
 Content to creep where others strode before,  
 And lowly sing whence they did, singing, soar.

But though the mightier Bards have passed away,  
 Should we our heart-felt homage still delay?  
 Nor seek our lasting gratitude to speak,  
 Tho' language fail and words be all too weak?  
 Great though our cause, and feeble our design,  
 The humblest Pilgrim may approach the shrine  
 Where worship all. Thus we our tribute bring,  
 And hail thee, Shakespeare, England's Minstrel King!  
 Not to thy glory only—nor thy praise,  
 (Thou needest none from modern minstrel's lays)  
 Men meet to-day within the banquet hall,  
 Or, pilgrims, rove where Avon's waters fall,  
 Or seek the crowded theatre to hear  
 Thy tuneful lines, and wake the echoing cheer;—  
 Not for all this. The impulse they obey  
 A piled-up debt of gratitude to pay—  
 A long accumulated debt of years,  
 The heritage of many smiles and tears,  
 Of home delights, of teachings vast and grand;  
 For this all hearts in this thy native land  
 Now beat as one, and would fit trophy raise  
 To hand *their* homage down to future days,  
 Some fitting monument to long remain,  
 And link Eliza's with Victoria's reign.

Oh! why need critics snarl and small wits blame?  
 And yet when Garrick ruled they did the same,  
 Yet Garrick's name is still a "household word,"  
 While his detractors, silenced ere scarce heard,  
 All unrecorded, e'en to evil fame,  
 Are copied still by those I will *not* name,  
 Assured the fungus of the scribbling mind  
 Will die and rot, or but produce its kind,  
 While sterling worth, howe'er "The Times" may sneer,  
 The pool subsiding will rise pure and clear.  
 Yet not to them, to you we would appeal,  
 To join our ranks and emulate our zeal.  
 No selfish end to gain have we in view,  
 The nameless scribblers *know* that this is true,  
 E'en while to crush our honest aim they seek,  
 And print the libels which they dare not speak.  
 Come then, and aid us in our grand design  
 To raise to England's Bard some fitting shrine,  
 That men may say, when pointing to the spot,  
 Though late, and raised for "benefits forgot,"  
 The public voice was heard on that high day  
 That England chose her gratitude to pay,  
 And, owning mighty SHAKESPEARE King and Lord,  
 Gave to the pen, what oft she gave the sword,  
 A statue worthy of the proudest name  
 That wafts abroad her glory and her fame,  
 That stirs all hearts where good Victoria's sway  
 Is felt in boundless regions far away;  
 Where'er St. George's banner is unfurled,  
 Shakespeare! the Minstrel Monarch of the world!



## III.

Come then, while fancy points my votive song  
 To those bright scenes the poet loved so long;  
 Picture fair Avon's time-enchanted stream,  
 Upon whose banks perchance the Poet's dream  
 Teem'd with wild shapes of love, with beauty fraught,  
 Sublime creations of the realms of thought.  
 Here oft perchance the youthful Shakespeare strayed,  
 To sing but of some simple cottage maid,  
 'Till Genius, wandering, heard the votive strain,  
 And stamped indelibly the Poet's brain.  
 Here 'twas our Shakespeare, in his earlier hours,  
 First drew from Nature's streams and fields and flowers,  
 When upon Avon's banks he erst reclined,  
 And the huge workings of his master-mind  
 First woke that Lyre, whose magic, mighty tone,  
 Hath made the sweetest melodies his own—  
 Hath raised that great and ever-varying theme  
 That hallows still fair Avon's town and stream.

## DUET.

DOWN BY THE AVON'S FLOWING STREAM.

[*Music by* STEPHEN GLOVER.]

Down by the Avon's flowing stream,  
 There came a Bard, in his youth, to dream;  
 Loved by the gentle fairies long,  
 They weaved around him the spell of song.  
     With visions bright  
     They charmed his sight,  
     In legends old  
     Their loves they told.

'Twas thus he dreamed his youth away,  
 And wove his magic spell,  
 And now in SHAKESPEARE'S tuneful lay  
 The gentle fairies dwell;  
 And still they rove, when fades the beam,  
 Down by the Avon's flowing stream.

"I know a bank," said the Fairy Queen,  
 "Where oft he sleeps on the daisied green;"  
 "*I know a Bank*," sung the Bard of old,  
 When to our wonder his dream he told.

Since that sweet time,  
 In his sweet rhyme,  
 In fairies bright  
 We take delight,  
 And still we while the hours away,  
 'Neath SHAKESPEARE'S magic spell,  
 And with him love the paths to stray  
 Where gentle fairies dwell;  
 For still they rove, when fades the beam,  
 Down by the Avon's flowing stream.

#### IV.

Change we the scene—the busy town  
 Now claims the actor of renown;  
 And Shakespeare and Dick Burbadge meet,  
 And in the mimic scene compete;  
 While many a tavern's merriest night  
 Is when they meet, with spirits light,  
 The merry actors of the day,  
 To con the last or next new play,  
 And, o'er a cheerful cup of sack,  
 To laugh behind their Patron's back:  
 For patrons then the stage could boast—  
 No actor-Parsons ruled the roast;

The learned Peer—the wealthy cit—  
 The spendthrift, still a man of wit:  
 They ruled the town, and their applause  
 First gave the stage its careless laws;  
 No foreign singers, with their strains,  
 Absorbed the honest actor's gains.  
 Then, too, the Court its influence shed,  
 And good Queen Bess the fashions led;  
 The sov'ran lady of the land  
 Could well sweet Shakespeare understand,  
 For, skilled in wit as courtly grace,  
 No promptings needed she to trace  
 The brightest jewel of her crown,  
 That almost hands her glory down  
 To these our times. So Shakespeare thrives  
 And writes for her "The Merry Wives;"  
 And then, a simple, honest man,  
 Returns to where his race began,  
 Laden with honours and renown,  
 And sanctifies his native town,  
 Washed by the Avon's gentle wave—  
 His home, his birthplace, and his grave!

## SONG.

THE BIRTHPLACE, THE HOME, AND THE GRAVE OF THE BARD.

All hail to the shrine, for the spot must be holy  
 That cradled in infancy genius and worth;  
 Oh! what though the roof may be humble and lowly,  
 It shelter'd the gem that shone proudest on earth.  
 'Tis not mid the gay halls of riches and splendour  
 The home of true genius alone can be found,  
 But in dwellings like those, where our homage we render,  
 With heaven above them, and nature around.

## CHORUS.

Then hail to the shrine, be it hallowed, for never  
 Shall we, who sweet Shakespeare have learnt to regard,  
 Forget the dear scene where the Avon runs ever—  
 The birthplace—the home—and the grave of the bard.

That nation can ne'er be debased or degraded,  
 Whose people still cherish, with feelings of pride,  
 The spots that the halo of Genius pervaded—  
 The home where it dwelt, the place where it died.  
 Then perish the slave who with rude hands would sever  
 The relics of him who made language divine;  
 May they stand like his fame, which endureth for ever,  
 That millions unborn may still visit the shrine.

## CHORUS.

Then hail to the shrine, be it hallowed, for never  
 Shall we, who sweet Shakespeare have learnt to regard,  
 Forget the dear scene where the Avon runs ever—  
 The birthplace—the home—and the grave of the bard.

## V.

And now two centuries have passed away,  
 And Charles's wits have lived their little day,  
 And "want of decency," that "want of sense,"  
 No longer gives the public ear offence,  
 For GARRICK rises to pursue his way,  
 And once more Shakespeare o'er all hearts holds sway. }  
 'Twas 'neath this roof he essayed first to play,  
 Here, where we meet, devoid of pomp or state,  
 His favourite bard and ours to celebrate;  
 Fit time, fit place, fit audience too, we trust,  
 To laud his name and venerate his dust.

Yet Garrick found the public taste was low,  
 And Johnson prophesied 'twould still be so;

The *Behms* and *D'Urfreys* he deemed so grotesque,  
 Are gone, but still we've glitter and burlesque;  
 The tortured word—the laboured pun and joke,  
 That oftener sneers than honest mirth provoke;  
 The *twice Dundrearies* that take all the town,  
 And bring the merry peals of laughter down.  
 Yes! still our Shakespeare must endure the rage  
 Of morbid fashions that corrupt the stage—  
 E'en as the sun when clouds obscure the ray  
 That else would glisten from the orb of day;  
 His vacant throne usurped by maudlin plays,  
 Sensation “headers” in the sea of baize.  
 How could e'en Shakespeare with those writers cope,  
 Who don't depend on *lines*—but on *a rope*?  
 E'en Richard's self, when played, the palm must yield  
 To supernumeraries for Bosworth field;  
 New *French* effects in “Hamlet” we must see—  
 A thing “undreamt in our philosophy.”  
 Yet I'd not censure this sight-loving age,  
 If left to Shakespeare but one modern stage,  
 Nor grudge each tinselled scene we now behold,  
 (With Shakespeare but regilding purest gold,)  
 If the supporters of our stage would try  
 To mend the morals while they charm the eye—  
 That vulgar crowds might not so eager be,  
 To applaud the Drama of the Tyburn tree.

## VI.

Degraded Drama! yet not all too late,  
 Thy faithful friends thy power would reinstate;  
 Nor need I proofs, when such her friends afford,  
 In the warm hearts around this festive board—

Hearts that must throb with every fond delight,  
 In union with the Spirit of the night!  
 Yet there are names upon the Drama's rolls—  
 Marston—the worthy follower of Knowles—  
 Coyne—Bernard—Bulwer—Oxenford—and more  
 Whose comedies still set the pit a-roar—  
 Whose muses still in virtue's cause prevail  
 To “point the moral” and “adorn the tale.”  
 Then if our Isles can boast these gifted men,  
 If virtue point and genius guide the pen,  
 The star of Hope is shining thro' the gloom  
 That may the light of Britain's stage relume.  
 Oh! may their works, beyond this passing age,  
 Still keep their proud position on the stage—  
 When Time, the test of fame, has fled by,  
 And yielded them “a name that cannot die.”  
 But while my muse, with laudatory strain,  
 Extols the playwrights of Victoria's reign,  
 The olden poets may not be forgot  
 By those who circle round this hallowed spot.  
 What lover of sweet Shakespeare could afford  
 To lose the many beauties of John Ford?  
 Or pass unheeded o'er each brilliant line  
 That makes thy works, Beaumont and Fletcher, shine?  
 Not the long lapse of ages shall deter  
 The well-earned bays of Philip Massinger  
 Wreathing his temples, while they gild his name  
 With those emblazoned on the scroll of fame:  
 But, next and nearest to our Shakespeare's heart,  
 Who of his laurels once could claim a part,  
 On fame's high throne dost thou securely sit,  
 Oh! rare Ben Jonson—with thy stores of wit.

But most, oh ! Shakespeare—most we venerate  
 The wondrous shapes thou didst delineate ;  
 The fair *Miranda*, all devoid of guile,  
 That peerless spirit of the lonely isle ;  
 The witty *Portia*, and *Nerissa* too,  
 And the fair daughter of the ruthless *Jew* ;  
 The gentle *Rosalind*, without compeer,  
 Grown to our hearts by recollections dear ;  
 The fair shrew *Katherine*, in each angry mood,  
 Whom more we love for being thus subdued ;  
 The wronged, but weak, yet trusting *Lady Ann*,  
 That hapless victim of designing man ;  
*Ophelia*, whose sad story doth impart  
 How frail a flower is trusting woman's heart ;  
 And the fair consort of the jealous Moor,  
 Whose wrongs we can but weep for and deplore.  
 Nor shall the youthful *Juliet* be forgot,  
 While feeling hearts can wail her hapless lot ;  
 And, one rare gem of worth and wit combined,  
 In which the triumphs of a virtuous mind  
 The magic pen of Shakespeare did engage,  
 Lives in the portraiture of "*Sweet Ann Page*."

Here would I pause, lest you should haply deem  
 My humble muse unequal to my theme ;  
 Yet would I fain some passing tribute pay,  
 To laud the hero of each high-wrought play ;  
*Hamlet*—*Othello*—*Lear*—the vengeful *Jew*,  
 So wild, so wondrous, yet to nature true :  
*Coriolanus*—*Cæsar*—long shall stand,  
 Touched by the magic of our Shakespeare's wand,  
 In monumental pride to grace the stage,  
 And show past manners to a future age.

And, oh! where else, where can we look upon  
 So rare a miracle as fat *Sir John*?  
 Shakespeare alone could draw the unctuous knight,  
 That, as the past, will future times delight.  
 More would I say—but time, with sweeping wing,  
 The stealthy hours will o'er us silent fling,  
 And to far abler men must I resign  
 The task of lauding Shakespeare's mighty line;  
 Enough for me, if kindly you regard  
 My humble offering to the brilliant bard;  
 Enough to feel, if weakly 'tis expressed,  
 Your better judgments can supply the rest.

Yet some "last words," before I close the page—  
 Brief mention of the actors of our stage.  
 What! are there none to fill the mimic scene—  
 To catch the mantle of the generous *Kean*?  
 Are all the actors of the *Kemble* school  
 Lost to the Theatre they once could rule?  
 The boards where *Foote* and *David Garrick* played,  
 Unmeaning spectacle alone pervade?  
 No! not while *Phelps* will his ripe powers engage,  
 To grace and elevate the British stage;  
 While *Helen Faucit*, now too seldom seen,  
 Still lives, her well-earned laurels fresh and green;  
 While *Stirling* acts, and *Compton* keeps the boards,  
 And *Webster* glimpses of the past affords;  
 While *Henry Marston*, artist good and true,  
 Still keeps the Drama's polar star in view;  
 SHAKESPEARE, again enthroned, may crown the stage,  
 The noblest, greatest bard of EVERY AGE!







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